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ABSTRACT

Noting that contemporary society has shifted from an industrial society to one which is information and service based, this paper speaks to the need for the addition of information access skills to educational curriculums, as has been the case in Georgia. Recommendations for libraries of all types by the Georgia Governor's Pre-White House Conference on Library and Information Services (September 5-6, 1990) are presented. Those recommendations, which heavily impact media education, include: achieving adequate funding, establishing library cooperation with external reference and information sources; advancing library technology; providing continuing education services; establishing an information clearinghouse; and providing services for special populations. Recognizing that school library media specialists are an integral element in the school program in their roles as information specialists, teachers, and instructional consultants, it is concluded that technology, training, and resources must be recognized as priorities for the information age. (MAB)

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School Library Media: Priorities for the Information Age

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Paper presented at the First Congressional District Post-Conference Hearing of the Georgia Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services.

January 7, 1991
Statesboro, Georgia

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We are living in the "Third Wave" of revolutionary, social change. According to Alvin Toffler (1980), the First Wave--the agricultural society--spanned from about 8000 B.C. to around 1750 A.D. The Second Wave, from the mid-1700's to the mid-1950's, encompassed the industrial society. Toffler dated the start of the Third Wave at about 1955, the first time service and white-collar workers outnumbered blue-collar workers.

Similar societal changes were described by John Naisbitt (1982) as a "megatrend"--a shift from an industrial society to an information and service society. Naisbitt and Aburdeen (1985) later stated that basically we have the same educational system in the information age as we had for the industrial society. They proposed that along with the three Rs, there be an emphasis on thinking, learning, and creating.

The recognition of the need for special skills for the information age has been evidenced at both the state and national levels. In Georgia, the state's Quality Core Curriculum calls for the teaching of Information Access Skills

across all grade levels and across all strands of the curriculum. Nationally, new guidelines for school library media programs have been published with the imposing title of Information Power (1988). Likewise, colleges and universities have restructured the curriculum of library media preparation programs to better reflect the needs of the information age.

Needs for libraries of all types were discussed at the Georgia Governor's Pre-White House Conference on Library and Information Services, held September 5-6, 1990, in Atlanta (Recommendations, 1990). The conference recommended, in priority order, that libraries:

1. Seek funding at the local, state and/or federal levels for:
   a. Adequate collections, services, and staff
   b. Resource sharing
   c. Library services for special populations, eg., the blind, physical handicapped, elderly, etc.

2. Encourage cooperation and collaboration among all types of libraries and agencies.

3. Move ahead in the areas of automation and technology.

4. Actively and aggressively work to increase the level of literacy.

5. Implement public relations programs to improve their image in order to increase use and support.

6. Support professional and continuing education for staff.

7. Seek legislation for a state depository and distribution/clearing house of information.

8. Manage resources effectively.

9. Ensure free and/or equal access to information and library service for all.

10. Design and support preservation activities.

Certainly all of the above recommendations are professionally defensible and can be supported by librarians in general and by school media specialists in particular. Aside from the basic and ever-present need for adequate funding, the

recommendations which especially impact media education are library cooperation, technology, continuing education, a state information clearinghouse, and services for special populations.

In media education, library cooperation is viewed as an extension of the building collection and services. Knowledge of external reference and information sources is essential to the efficient use of existing funds. Sources include not only books and information retrieval systems in other libraries but also community and human resources.

Technology, whether for circulation or for information retrieval services, is the foundation of the information age. Technology is not just an expenditure, but it is also an investment which will pay off in increased productivity and, at the same time, teach skills required for the present and future.

Rapid technological changes require constant training and re-training. Opportunities for both professional and continuing education need to be expanded. Perhaps additional resources for

training could be accomplished through expanded school and business partnerships.

Materials for state and local studies are difficult to locate. A clearing house with an easily accessible database would provide much needed information for both educational and citizen action purposes.

School personnel are trained to identify special needs students. However, special needs also require special resources. Once again we are back to a strong emphasis on funding, technology, and cooperation with community agencies.

In summary, school library media specialists serve three roles as defined in the Information Power (1988) guidelines: information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. Providing access to information, teaching the skills necessary to access information, and bringing a special perspective to curriculum development help ensure that school media specialists are an integral part of the school program. Therefore technology, training, and resources (both human and financial) must be recognized as priorities for the information age.

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